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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [NO](#)

SUBJECT: NORWAY: PARLIAMENTARY PRESIDENT ON SENDING FORCES
TO AFGHANISTAN, MIDDLE EAST, JSF

Classified By: DCM Kevin M. Johnson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In a December 8 meeting with DCM and P/E Couns, Thorbjorn Jagland, Parliamentary President and senior Labor Party statesman, reviewed Norway's debate over sending forces to southern Afghanistan. Jagland has very publicly favored sending more troops, and is optimistic that the GON will reconsider its decision in the New Year. On the Middle East, Jagland is deeply concerned and urged the US to lead the parties into negotiations on final status issues quickly. End Summary.

Afghanistan

¶2. (C) In a December 8 meeting with DCM and P/E Couns, Thorbjorn Jagland, President of the Storting (Parliament) and senior Labor Party statesman, discussed current political issues in Norway. Jagland has very publicly criticized the GON's decision to reject NATO's request to send forces to southern Afghanistan. Commenting on his stance, Jagland said there is pressure within Norway's Labor Party to move on this matter. He praised the Embassy's approach to the matter so far, citing the Ambassador's speech, but suggested now is the time to hold back as things are working in the right direction. He said NATO would be wise to wait until the New Year before asking again for Norway to commit more troops, but implied at that point a positive answer might be forthcoming. He acknowledged that the public debate so far has unduly focused on the need for civil sector support in Afghanistan, forgetting that the military side must also be addressed.

¶3. (C) Jagland reflected that his outspoken position on this matter was disliked by some, but respected by others. He criticized Labor's coalition partner, the Social Left Party (SV), for bringing matters prematurely to the media, thereby blocking full discussion within the government. He noted that there is a big majority in the Storting in favor of sending more troops, and it was "bad for democracy for the small SV to decide such issues against this majority."

¶4. (C) The DCM raised the GON's efforts to promote a new UN mechanism to coordinate civilian aid in Afghanistan. He pointed out the difficulties a new layer would add and the stressed the importance of Afghan government ownership of the process.

Middle East

¶5. (C) Jagland has long been involved in the Middle East and had just recently returned from visiting Israel and the Palestine territories. He characterized Israel as having a

very weak government, or indeed, several governments. Meanwhile, he doubted Palestine would ever have a Unity Government. If no alternative to Hamas is established, people will continue to support extremists. Palestinians themselves, he said, are not extreme, especially on the West Bank, and do not want fundamentalists to take over. He strongly believes that the parties must move quickly to final status negotiations and a referendum, without waiting for a Unity Government to form. He noted that the Oslo Accords allow for the PLO to negotiate on behalf of Palestinians. Providing some hope for the future to average Palestinians, such as real preparation for a comprehensive agreement, is the way to weaken Hamas, he said.

¶6. (C) Answering a question about the GON's engagement of Hamas, Jagland said that his view has changed over time and he now believes that it is important for Norway to be in sync with other countries in isolating Hamas. Hamas, he stressed, really means it when it threatens to wipe Israel out of existence. Jagland then returned to his main theme that the peace process must get back on track and only the US through its leadership can make this happen.

¶7. (C) Discussing Norwegian views of Israel, Jagland said that they are very supportive of Israel but see what is happening in Palestine and sympathize with "the tragedy of the Palestinian people." Israel's actions in Palestine, he commented, are seen as just hurting Israel itself. He claimed that more people travel to Palestine from Norway than from any other country, and so there is a high level of first hand knowledge.

JSF and the Russians

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¶8. (C) Commenting on GON plans to purchase a new fighter jet, Jagland felt the selection process has improved because there is greater competition among JSF, Eurofighter and Gripen. He is convinced that Norway must have a new fighter to maintain its independence from Russia. SV's desire to rely on ships was impracticable and reflected a view--shared with the EU--that underestimates the Russians.

Bio Notes

¶9. (C) Jagland was leader of the Labor Party 1992 to 2002. During that time, he served as PM from 1996-1997. He lost his job as party leader in 2002 to current PM, Jens Stoltenberg. Jagland also served as FM from March 2000 to October 2001. He has been a strong supporter of the bilateral relationship and clearly feels uncomfortable with SV's role in helping determine the coalition government's foreign policy.
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